ARISTOTLE AND MENANDER ON EDUCATION

1. Obviously, Aristotle shared the view of the old Solon (Fr. 27 West) in believing that the human lifespan could be divided into seven-year periods (hebdomads): Polit. H 17, p. 1336 b 37 Ross, Δόο δ' εἰσίν ἡλικίαι πρὸς ὃς ἀναγκαῖον διηρήσθαι τὴν παιδείαν, πρὸς τὴν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπτὰ μέχρι ἡβῆς καὶ πάλιν πρὸς τὴν ἀφ' ἡβῆς μέχρι τῶν ἐνός καὶ εἴκοσι ἐτῶν. οἱ γὰρ ταῖς ἐβδομάσι διαφρούστες τὰς ἡλικίας ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ λέγουσιν οὐ κακῶς, δεὶ δὲ τῇ διαιρέσει τῆς φύσεως ἐπακολουθεῖν.

2. The age of seven (and not fourteen or twenty-one) seems to be crucial for Aristotle. For it is then that a man becomes „mature“ in the sense that he becomes capable of distinguishing between good and evil. Compare Aëtius 5.23 and Ps. Galen Philos. hist. 127: Ἡράκλειτος καὶ οἱ Στιωικοὶ Ἀρκέσαθαι τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τῆς τελειότητος περί τὴν δευ-

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794 παίει παραστάς νεφράν ἐς πλευρὰν ξίφει
797 πίπτω δὲ πρηνής οἷ δ' δριμμα πωλικόν...
803 τάρατσι λυτρά πρὸς φίλων πεπονθέναι.
972 Βάνχοι προφήτης ὦστε Παγγαίου πέτραν...

The conclusion to be drawn from this evidence is that Rhesus is „a poor poet’s play“. It just cannot be the work of a Euripides (not even twenty years old). Thus, pace Ritchie, I would side with Wilamowitz first⁵, with, say, H. D. F. Kitto last⁶ in believing that Rhesus is a spurious play⁷.

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⁵ Analecta Euripidea (Berlin, 1875), p. 198.
⁷ As is known since Chr. Riedel (Alliteration bei den drei grossen griechischen Tragikern, Diss. Erlangen, 1900), the πι-alliteration is the most frequent one in Greek tragedy (followed by kappa and sigma). Among the assonances, those of alpha and epsilon are the most common ones. Compare Ritchie 241f., and now M. Marcovich, Three-Word Trimeter in Greek Tragedy (Beiträge zur Klass. Philologie, 158), Königstein/Taunus, 1984, p. 183 and n. 21. On the π/φ-parechésis compare also Eduard Fraenkel ad Aeschylus Agamemnon 268.
3. Consequently, according to Aristotle, a man’s education should begin at the age of seven. But when does it stop, may I ask? In other words, did Aristotle share another feeling of the old Solon, Γηράσκω δ’ αἰεί πολλά διδασκόμενος? Apparently, not. According to Aristotle, a man may well become a miser with old age or disability. And if that happens his miserliness cannot be cured, since reeducation in old age is impossible: ΕΝ Δ 1, p. 1121 b 12, Ή δ’ άνελευθερία άνίατός τ’ εστίν (δοκεΐ γάρ το γήρας και τάσα άδυνατα άνελευθέρους ποιεΐν) καλ. . 2

4. Theophrastus took over this view from Aristotle: an old man is unable to change his way of life, no matter how harmful it may be to him, for reeducation in old age is difficult, even impossible: Περὶ παιδείας apud Stobaeum Π. 31. 124 (II, p. 240. 18—25 Wachsmuth),... καί ή άναστροφή χαλεπή, μάλλον δε σχεδόν άδύνατος. ούτε γάρ δ χρόνος δίδωσιν εξουσίαν μεταθέσεως ουθ’ ή φύσις δύναται μεταμανθάνειν τό βέλτιον... 3

5. I now come to Menander. His characters Misanthrope (Cnemon in Dyscolus) and Miser (Euclio in Aulularia) do not change their way of life at the end of the respective play, no matter how detrimental it proved to be to them. Cnemon frankly admits (Dyscolus 711f.): οὐθ’ ἂν εἰς δύνατο με/τοῦτο μεταπείσαί τις υμῶν, ἀλλά συγχωρήσατε. Compare 252, οὔτ’ ἂν μεταπείσαί νοσήτων. Why Menander believed that a misanthrope or a miser cannot be reeducated? My answer would be: probably because both of them are γέροντες, and, according to Aristotle, reeducation in old age is difficult, even impossible (άνίατος, άδύνατος).

In conclusion, in believing that an old man cannot be reeducated, Menander most probably stood under the influence of the theory of Aristotle, via Theophrastus 4.

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1 As for the text, see M. Marcovich, Hermès 94 (1966) 121f.